

Message Text

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FM AMEMBASSY ADDIS ABABA

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 8634

INFO AMEMBASSY MOGADISCIO

USCINCEUR VAIHINGEN GERMANY

AMEMBASSY KHARTOUM

AMEMBASSY NAIROBI

AMCONSUL ASMARA

C O N F I D E N T I A L ADDIS ABABA 4515

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PINR PINT PINS ET

SUBJECT: REPORTING ON INTERNAL ETHIOPIAN SITUATION:
ETHNIC FACTOR

REFS: A) STATE 71845 PARA 1 (E) AND (F); B) ADDIS 4324;
C) ADDIS 4350; D) NIS (55A) SEC. 57 OF 3/68

1. RECENT EVENTS HAVE SPURRED RE-EMERGENCE OF ETHNIC, RELIGIOUS AND REGIONAL DEMANDS FOR ADMINISTRATIVE REFORM AND FOR MORE PROPORTIONAL SHARING OF COUNTRY'S ECONOMIC AND POLITICAL BENEFITS. ANY EFFECTIVE COALITION OF TRADITIONALLY DISPARATE GALLA GROUPS (ESTIMATED 40 PERCENT OF POPULATION) WOULD HAVE SIGNIFICANT IMPACT ON STABILITY AND FUTURE DIRECTIONS COUNTRY. THERE INDICATIONS GALLA MIDDLE CLASS, MAINLY FROM SHOA AND WOLLEGA, ATTEMPTING ORGANIZE AND TO LINK UP IN VARYING DEGREES WITH MUSLIM ORGANIZATION, MILITARY AND POLICE DISSIDENTS, AND LOCAL "PEOPLE'S COMMITTEES". THIS GROUP SUPPORTS DEMANDS OF PROVINCIAL ELITE AND PARLIAMENTARIANS FOR REMOVAL "IRRESPONSIBLE" LOCAL GOVERNMENT OFFICIALS, LABOR ISSUES SUCH AS MINIMUM WAGE AND THE WIDESPREAD DESIRE FOR LAND REFORM (PARTICULARLY REDISTRIBUTION
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ISSUE).

2. TRIBAL COMPOSITION MILITARY (BELIEVED OVERWHELMINGLY CHRISTIAN) NOT KNOWN BUT ADDIS A-135 OF 1973 PROVIDED ESTIMATES FOR BOTH OFFICER AND ENLISTED RANKS. AIR FORCE WOULD APPEAR HAVE MORE TIGREAN/ERITREAN REPRESENTATION THAN AVERAGE BECAUSE IT, LIKE SCIENCE AND TECHNICAL FACULTY OF HSIU, ATTRACTS THE MORE SKILL-ORIENTED NORTHERNERS. AS WOULD BE EXPECTED, LEVEL OF EDUCATION AND POLITICAL CONSCIOUSNESS HIGHER AMONG AIR FORCE RANKS THAN REST OF NATION. (SEE IRG-830-0075-74 PARA E). WE THINK THESE CULTURAL FACTORS RATHER THAN ETHNIC BACKGROUND PER SE PROBABLY MAKE FOR GREATER RADICALISM IN AIR FORCE AND THAT PARTICIPATION IN FEBRUARY/MARCH EVENTS BY NON-AMHARAS IN OR OUT OF MILITARY, RELATED PRIMARILY TO GENERAL CONCERNS FOR THEIR OWN ECONOMIC BETTERMENT AND FOR BROAD REFORM AND ONLY SUBSIDIARILY TO ETHNIC ADVANTAGES OR ATTITUDES. SIMILARLY, NEWLY ELECTED 30 MEMBER HSIU STUDENT COUNCIL DOES NOT APPEAR BE DOMINATED BY PARTICULAR REGIONAL GROUP BUT BY REPRESENTATIVES ASSOCIATED WITH LONGSTANDING STUDENT IDEALS (SEE ADDIS A-165 OF 1973). AS FAR AS WE CAN TELL, LINKS BETWEEN STUDENT LEADERSHIP AND MILITARY DISSIDENTS--THOUGH EFFECTIVE--TEND BE LARGELY INFORMAL AND BASED ON A BROADER COMMON CAUSE. UNDOUBTEDLY, FEELINGS OF POLITICAL AND ECONOMIC EXPLOITATION AMONG NON-AMHARAS HAS STRENGTHENED THEIR COHESION. WHILE ERITREAN STUDENTS TEND SYMPATHIZE WITH ELF, WE HAVE NO INDICATION ERITREANS IN MILITARY NECESSARILY FEEL SAME WAY.

3. NORTHERNERS TEND VIEW LIJ. ENDALKACHEW AS AMHARA CHAUVINIST AND HARDLINER ON POLITICAL CONCESSIONS FOR ERITREA AS WELL AS OTHER NON-AMHARA AREAS. "HE IS NO UNIFIER". WE WOULD EXPECT ZAWDE BEGRE-SALASSIE OF TIGRE (YOHANNES IV) ROYAL LINE BE MORE ACCEPTABLE, PARTICULARLY TO ERITREANS AND TIGREANS. GALLA ELITE, FOR EXAMPLE BUSINESSMEN, PARLIAMENTARIANS AND PROVINCIAL TOWN LEADERS, CRITICAL THEIR CURRENT UNDER-REPRESENTATION IN CABINET AND SLOW PACE REDRESSING BALANCE EXHIBITED IN ENDALKACHEW'S APPOINTMENTS SO FAR. (ADDIS 4374; A-85 & 80).

4. FARILY RELIABLE SOURCES REPORT EXISTENCE GALLA COORDINATING COMMITTEE IN ADDIS. OROMO (GALLA) SOCIETY SAID BE HEADED BY MEMBER PARLIAMENTARY STAFF AND COMPOSED OF GALLA CIVIL SERVANTS, BUSINESSMEN AND LANDOWNERS PRIMARILY FROM SHOA, WOLLEGA AND

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KAFFA, I.E., THOSE IN "BUFFER GROUP" WHICH SHARES IN POLITICAL, ECONOMIC BENEFITS. REPORTEDLY OROMO SOCIETY NOT IN PARTICULARLY CLOSE OR FORMAL COMMUNICATION WITH MILITARY COMMITTEE(S). EXTENT GALLA PARTICIPATION AND CO-ORDINATION WITH MUSLIM ORGANIZATION NOT CLEAR AT THIS TIME, SEE ADDIS 4424. SOCIETY DOES NOT HAVE DIRECT LINKS WITH GALLA SELF-HELP ORGANIZATIONS AND PERHAPS WITH REMNANTS GEN. TADDESSEE BIRU'S EARLIER COALITION (SEE REF D). (WE UNDERSTAND THAT AFTER HIS RECENT ESCAPE FROM HOUSE

ARREST, TADDESSEE BIRU WAS FORGIVEN BY EMPEROR FOR ROLE IN 1966 REVOLT AND IS CURRENTLY MOVING UNDER LOOSE CONTROL BETWEEN ADDIS AND HIS FARM.) OROMO SOCIETY LINKED WITH PEOPLE'S COMMITTEE IN JIMMA AND SIMILAR "UNDERGROUND MOVEMENTS" IN SHOA, WOLLEGA, BALE, SIDAMO ETC. WHILE THESE COMMITTEES SAID BE COMPOSED VARIOUS ETHNIC ELEMENTS BANDED TOGETHER FOR PURPOSE FORCING REMOVAL CORRUPT OFFICIALS AND LARGER, EXPLOITIVE SHOAN LANDLORDS LIKE RAS MESFIN, GALLA MEMBERS ALSO TEND VIEW COMMITTEES AS VEHICLES FOR GREATER AUTONOMY AND COMPLETE REMOVAL AMHARA LORDS FROM GALLA LANDS. GALLA LEADERSHIP ON COMMITTEES DRAWN FROM MIDDLE CLASS, SUCH AS U.S. EDUCATED CHAMBER OF COMMERCE REPRESENTATIVE, YEGEZU ODA IN JIMMA AND PROGRESSIVE LAWYER IN AMBO, ATO ARGWE.

5. ACCORDING SOME GALLA POLITICIANS, GALLA LANDLORDS AND "BALABETS", E.G., IN SHOA, ARE WILLING REDISTRIBUTE LANDS TO THEIR BRETHREN AND ARE ALIGNING IN CONTEXT LAND REFORM ISSUES ON ETHNIC RATHER THAN CLASS BASIS. (REPORTEDLY RAS MESFIN HAS BEEN ATTEMPTING INSTILL FEAR OF PEASANT REVOLT IN GALLA LANDLORDS AND UNITE THEM WITH AMHARAS IN OPPOSING LAND RE-DISTRIBUTION. HE AND CERTAIN GOVERNMENT OFFICIALS IN SHOA SAID BE PREACHING LINE OF CHAOS, BLOODY CIVIL WAR AND SOMALI INVASION SHOULD IEG IMPLEMENT LAND REFORM "TOO QUICKLY".) GALLA LEADERS PREDICT LAND REFORM IN CHRISTIAN GALLA HIGHLANDS WILL NOT ENTAIL THE BLOODSHED THAT THEY FORESEE IN "NEWLY CONQUERED" TERRITORIES, E.G., SIDAMO, BALI, ARUSSI AND KAFFA WHERE LANDLORDS ARE MAINLY AMHARAS. (ALSO SEE ADDIS 4104, 3724, A-85 AND 6127 ('73). GALLA LEADERS IMPLY IEMF WILL SUPPORT LAND DISTRIBUTION EFFORTS AND POINT OUT THAT LARGE NUMBER OFFICERS AND MEN ARE CHRISTIAN GALLAS AND SYMPATHETIC MINORITIES, E.G., GURAGE. THEY CONCERNED ABOUT TERRITORIAL ARMY AND EMERGENCY POLICE (VIEWED AS AMHARA DOMINATED) AS WELL AS EXPECTED OPPOSITION FROM AMHARA LANDLORDS BUT CLAIM THEY CAN MUSTER FORCES OF THEIR OWN.

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6. GALLA LEADERS TEND BE WARY OF USG AND FEEL IT HAS LONG DEMONSTRATED SUPPORT FOR AMHARA RULE. WHEN PRESSED THEY POINT TO ALLEGED US HELP IN SUPPRESSING 1960 COUP ATTEMPT. (THEY ALSO TEND VIEW US ECONOMIC AID AS PROP FOR AMHARA REGIME.) SOME GALLA TOWN LEADERS, BALABETS, PARLIAMENTARIANS AND BUSINESSMEN HAVE ASKED REPORTING OFFICER WHAT USG RESPONSE WOULD BE IF EMPEROR/ENDALKACHEW REQUESTED URGENT MILITARY ASSISTANCE OR SHOW FOR FORCE TO HELP PRESERVE SHOAN AMHARA/ARISTOCRATIC PRE-EMINENCE IN FACE OF "GALLA THREAT." (EMBOFF RESPONDED TO SCEPTICAL QUESTIONERS THAT USG HAS NO INTENTIONS TAKE SIDES IN INTERNAL ETHIOPIAN EVENTS OR CRISES.)

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